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DEPT FOR DRL, INL, AND EUR/SCE, NSC FOR BRAUN, USUN FOR
DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: CHIEF OF MISSION STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF
UNITY TO KOSOVO LEADERS

Classified By: COM TINA S. KAIDANOW FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In her initial calls on Kosovo's leaders, COM urged them to stay united and not let personal differences interfere with their seriousness of purpose in the Vienna status negotiations. President Fatmir Sejdiu vented his frustration at the antics of opposition leaders on the negotiating team. Kosovo Assembly president Kole Berisha also said he feels that the opposition is more interested in interfering with the work of the Assembly than in cooperating productively. Prime Minister Ceku seemed distracted by a letter he received from the senior coalition partner, the LDK party, which purports to limit his authority, but was adamant that he has the necessary support he needs to continue to fulfill his mandate to serve the people of Kosovo. END SUMMARY.

President Sejdiu: We Will Maintain the Unity of the Negotiating Team

12. (C) COM met privately with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu on July 28, one day after she had accompanied Special Representative Ambassador Frank Wisner to his meeting with Sejdiu. The meeting was also one day after opposition members of the Kosovo Assembly failed to return from a mid-day coffee break to listen to Sejdiu's report on the July 24 meeting between high level delegations in Vienna. Sejdiu told COM that since taking over as the head of the negotiating team in March 2006, he has strongly maintained the unity of the group despite challenges to his authority by opposition leaders Hashim Thaci from the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and Veton Surroi from the Reform Party Ora (PRO). According to Sejdiu, both opposed negotiating team coordinator Blerim Shala's position on the team, resulting in Sejdiu having to call meetings without both Shala and negotiating team spokesperson (and Sejdiu's primary advisor) Skender Hyseni. Sejdiu also recounted how, in the hope of developing a uniform position for the July 24 meeting in Vienna, he had asked for team members to provide the texts of their interventions. He said that of the four other team members, only Thaci provided the text of his presentation, but less than an hour before he delivered it.

13. (C) Sejdiu claimed that in Vienna, the team agreed he

would report to the Kosovo Assembly on the results of the meeting with Serbian President Boris Tadic and Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. He said he was astounded that after they were not allowed to review his presentation, Thaci and Surroi ordered their parliamentary delegates to boycott his address.

Sejdiu speculated on the reasons for Surroi's mischief, claiming that Surroi was angry he did not get to go to Washington to meet with Secretary Rice or to New York for two recent UNSC meetings on Kosovo. Sejdiu admitted that he should have allowed Thaci and Surroi to review his speech before the Kosovo Assembly so as to deny them the pretext for their boycott, and he vowed not to give in to any attempt by them to destroy the negotiating team.

14. (C) COM reminded Sejdiu of Ambassador Wisner's message of the previous day, in which Wisner emphasized the vital importance of maintaining unity among the negotiating team. She told Sejdiu that during the course of her initial calls she would meet with all the members of the negotiating team and underscore to them that the USG would hold each member responsible for any breakdown in the functioning of the team.

(Note: COM's conversations with Shala, Hyseni and Surroi will be reported septel.) In closing, the COM emphasized that the dynamics between the current governing coalition and the opposition cannot be allowed to get in the way of the final status negotiations.

Assembly President Berisha Also Frets about Opposition

15. (C) In her July 27 meeting with Kosovo Assembly president Kole Berisha, COM assured him that the smooth functioning of the Assembly continues to be of the highest importance to the U.S. government. The COM noted that the Assembly has the

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great responsibility of putting into effect not only legislation to stimulate the economy, but also laws that will protect the rights and interests of Kosovo's minorities, which is of special import during the final status negotiations. She praised Berisha and his staff for creating transparent processes in the Assembly during his tenure, and encouraged him to continue to improve the functioning of the institution.

16. (C) Berisha responded that, despite his efforts over the past four months to overcome the legacy of his autocratic predecessor (fellow LDK member Nexhat Daci) and open up the Assembly's procedures, the opposition appeared uninterested in working together productively with the majority coalition. "The honeymoon is over," he observed, and he complained particularly about the tendency of opposition delegates to boycott in an effort to delay proceedings.

17. (C) Berisha also touched briefly on the results of the independent audit of the Assembly, with which, he said, his office has cooperated fully. He fretted that the delay in publishing the report -- which the Auditor General's office has yet to complete -- would weaken his hand in eliminating troublesome employees in the Assembly staff aligned with the ousted ex-Assembly President Daci. COM offered to inquire about the audit, but noted that Berisha might have to act, regardless of the audit report's findings or the pace of its drafting, to remove employees who interfered with his reform agenda. (NOTE: On August 1 Berisha provided us with a copy of the proposed final audit report as presented to him by the Auditor General's office, which inexplicably omits earlier draft language critical of Daci's management and procurement under his tenure. We are looking into why these references have been deleted in the proposed final report. END NOTE).

Letter from LDK "Unpleasant," but Ceku Insists He Has the Support He Needs

18. (C) COM met with Prime Minister Agim Ceku on August 2, while Ceku was in the midst of dealing with a media maelstrom over a letter he received from the presidency of his senior

coalition partner, the League for a Democratic Kosovo (LDK). The letter purports to remind Ceku of the agreement between then-President Ibrahim Rugova (LDK) and then-prime minister Ramush Haradinaj (AAK) that additional ministries created after the formation of the coalition would go to the LDK. The letter also insisted that Deputy Prime Minister Lutfi Haziri (LDK), rather than Ceku, be responsible for oversight of individual LDK ministers. Ceku assured COM that although the letter was unpleasant, he understands that the current LDK leadership needs to strengthen its profile within the party in the run-up to this fall's party conference. He said that he had spoken with Sejdiu and Haziri, who both expressed their support. He also added -- vehemently -- that despite persistent rumors circulating around Pristina, he has no problem with the LDK or with AAK party head Haradinaj.

¶9. (C) COM agreed the LDK letter was clumsy, but noted that in all her consultations with LDK leaders -- especially President Sejdiu -- they had indicated full backing for Ceku and his efforts. She again emphasized the unity message, and pointed to Ceku's special role in ensuring that the government continues to focus on standards implementation. Ceku and his advisor, Avni Arifi, affirmed that they were working through August on the priority standards; Arifi said that the language law, one of three minority-related pieces of legislation which must be passed (the law on religion is already through parliament and the law on cultural heritage must go through a second reading), would make its way through the Assembly without problem after a compromise resolution was reached at government initiative with the head of the Turkish minority party.

Comment

¶10. (C) All three of Kosovo's top leaders listened closely to the COM's message of unity, purpose and flexibility in the

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Vienna negotiations. They stressed the need for a continued close relationship with the COM and the USG. Both Berisha and Ceku have asked to meet with the COM on a weekly basis. If the opposition continues to be difficult, these meetings will be important to reinforce USG support for the negotiation process. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
KAIDANOW